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RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA PRIORITY 0732
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RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA PRIORITY 0129
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY 1468
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6432
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000661

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/20/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UNSC](#) [BM](#) [CH](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: FRANCE READY TO PUSH FOR SPECIAL ENVOY BUT
SKEPTICAL ON FURTHER UN ACTION ON BURMA

REF: STATE 20000

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 b and d.

11. (C) SUMMARY: The French MFA maintains its longstanding position that the international community should pressure Burma to move toward democracy and a respect for human rights, but MFA desk officers Benoit Guidee and Jeremie Petit were skeptical, following the UNSC resolution's failure, that action in other UN venues could be anything more than symbolic. However, the MFA shares the USG conviction that the UN must appoint a strong Special Envoy, preferably from ASEAN. End Summary.

12. (C) Poloff delivered reftel demarche February 20 to Benoit Guidee, MFA desk officer for the UNSC in the International Organizations Bureau, and Jeremie Petit, MFA desk officer for Burma. Guidee and Petit were surprised to discover that the U.S. still hoped to keep Burma on the UNSC agenda, saying that in the French view, the Chinese veto had "decisively buried" the issue. That said, they assured us that the MFA would entertain any concrete proposals from the U.S. to keep the issue of Burma alive in the Security Council.

13. (C) The MFA believes that appointment of a Special Envoy remains the last recourse of those countries that want to push democracy and human rights within the UN, Guidee said. Although the MFA does not have a particular candidate in mind, Guidee portrayed the MFA's ideal hypothetical envoy: A citizen of an ASEAN nation who elicits respect from the Burmese regime -- perhaps for past military service or a track record of independence toward Western powers. At the same time, the envoy must have the tough-mindedness to press for concrete results, moving beyond what Guidee characterized as U/SYG Gambari's "disappointing" emphasis on dialogue as the sole barometer of success.

14. (C) Guidee and Petit cautioned against viewing a special envoy as a panacea, however, questioning whether a new envoy could exert any leverage on the Burmese regime. In the French view, Gambari's very modest accomplishments -- namely,

getting the Burmese to even speak to him at all -- should be credited to Chinese pressure. Guidee said the MFA believes the Chinese pushed Burma to cooperate nominally with Gambari or face Chinese support for a resolution. Without the threat of a resolution, Guidee was skeptical that Burma would cooperate with a new special envoy.

15. (C) On the subject of pressing the Burma agenda in other UN fora, Guidee worried that it would risk limiting the discussion only to human rights or forced labor. That was why the Security Council had been the ideal forum, he said, characterizing Burma's abuses as too widespread to be limited to any other UN venue. Further, he wondered if there was a risk for like-minded countries of diluting their message or support for their cause if they pressed simultaneously for a good offices mission and for Human Rights Council action. However, if the US planned to propose specific means to advance shared security concerns about Burma in either the HRC, or other UN venues, the MFA would be willing to consider a new strategy.

16. (C) Guidee and Petit saluted the US effort to demarche ASEAN nations and encourage them to pressure Burma. However, Guidee said the MFA regards ASEAN as rather "hapless" -- either unable or unwilling to act alone to credibly press Burma. Fellow members such as Vietnam and Laos are not democratic role models, and they generally urge ASEAN to overlook Burma's human rights abuses. ASEAN's most promising activists, in the French view, would be Singapore and the Phillipines, especially if their current exasperation with Burma led them to curb economic cooperation with Burma.

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